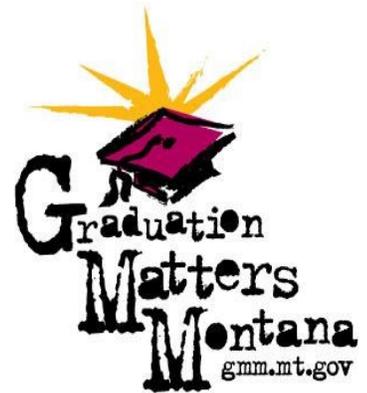


SB 14: Raise the legal dropout age to “age 18 or upon graduation”

What SB 14 does:

This bill raises the legal drop out age from "age 16" to “age 18 or upon graduation”. The bill also allows flexibility for students from the compulsory attendance requirement in order to allow them to pursue a GED, enroll in postsecondary education or an apprenticeship, or to attend Montana Job Corps or Youth Challenge. It exempts students who are home schooled. In the 2013-2014 school year, 1,581 students dropped out of school. This bill provides parents and educators with an additional tool to help keep kids in school. **It is estimated that an additional 190 students each year will stay in school with the passage of SB 14.**



Why we need SB 14:

Montana is one of only 17 states in the country that allow 16-year-olds to drop out of high school.ⁱ Montana’s legal dropout age of 16 was established back in 1921 – a time of very different social and economic demands. In today’s global economy, a student needs *at minimum* a high school diploma to find a decent-paying job. By the year 2018, it is estimated that 63% of the jobs in this country and 62% of the jobs in Montana will require education and training beyond high school.ⁱⁱ We need to set a statewide expectation for Montana students that they will graduate from high school.

Montana's dropout rate costs our state millions of dollars each year:

- Nearly 80% of male inmates and 75% of female inmates at Montana State Prison are high school dropouts.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Almost 30% of Montana’s high school dropouts meet the federal definition of low-income, which is twice the rate of high school graduates.^{iv}
- High school dropouts earn \$9,200 less per year than high school graduates and about one million dollars less over a lifetime than college graduates.^v
- The economy of Montana would see a combination of crime-reduction savings and additional revenue of about \$19.6 million each year if the male high school graduation rate increased by just 5 percent.^{vi}
- If Montana were able to cut the dropout rate in half, the state would gain \$12 million more a year in increased earnings and \$21 million more in home sales.^{vii}

SB 14 is a critical piece of a comprehensive, statewide strategy:

Graduation Matters Montana consists of forty-eight locally-designed initiatives that engage schools, communities, businesses and families in a focused effort to increase the number of students who graduate prepared for college and careers. More than seventy-five percent of Montana students currently attend a school with a Graduation Matters initiative. Since launching Graduation Matters Montana, our high school dropout rate has declined from 5.1 percent to 3.7 percent and the graduation rate has increased from 80.7 percent to 85.4 percent. SB 14 would provide communities with another strategy to build on the successes of the past two years.

Prepared by the Office of Public Instruction, January 2015

i National Conference of State Legislature, current as of August 2013

ii "Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018," The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, accessed 12/31/2012, <http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/montana.pdf>.

iii Montana Department of Corrections, *2009 Biennial Report*, Accessed 12/31/2012, <http://www.cor.mt.gov/content/Resources/Reports/2009BiennialReport.pdf>.

iv Jeffrey A. Springer and David A. Stuit, "Montana's High School Dropouts: Examining the Fiscal Consequences," *The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice* (2010).

v John M. Bridgeland, John J. Dilulio Jr., and Karen Burke Morison, *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts* (March 2006).

vi "Montana High Schools," Alliance for Excellent Education, accessed 12/31/2012, <http://www.all4ed.org/files/Montana.pdf>.

vii "Education and the Economy: Boosting Montana's Economy by Improving High School Graduation Rates," Alliance for Excellent Education, accessed 12.31.2012, http://www.all4ed.org/files/Montana_seb.pdf.